

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-01 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

ACDA-05 TRSE-00 SAJ-01 IO-04 AEC-05 SCI-02 DRC-01

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R 162019Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3270

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION NATO

USMISSION USUN

SECDEF

JCS WASHDC

USNMR SHAPE

CINCUSAREUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

USCINCEUR

CINCLANT

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MILITARY ADDRESSEES ALSO FOR POLADS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: FR, MNUC, MPOL, MARR, MORG

SUBJECT: FRENCH DEFENSE POLICY

REF: A. PARIS A525 OCTOBER 10, 1974; B. PARIS 24279

1. SUMMARY. FOLLOWING A COUNCIL OF DEFENSE MEETING OCTOBER 10, PRESIDED OVER BY PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING, DEFENSE MINISTER JACQUES SOUFFLET ANNOUNCED A NUMBER OF MEASURES WHICH REINFORCE RATHER THAN REDIRECT EXISTING FRENCH DEFENSE POLICY. GISCARD REPORTEDLY WILL REVEAL MORE OF HIS DEFENSE THINKING AT A MAJOR PRESS CONFERENCE SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 24. END SUMMARY.

2. DEFENSE MINISTER SOUFFLET ANNOUNCED THE FOLLOWING DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE DEFENSE COUNCIL:

A. DRAFT: FRANCE WILL RETAIN A 12-MONTH LENGTH OF SERVICE FOR CONSCRIPTS.

B. MEASURES TO AMELIORATE CONDITIONS OF MILITARY SERVICE: SOUFFLET ANNOUNCED THAT THE DAILY PAY OF CONSCRIPTS WILL BE RAISED FROM 2 TO 2 1/2 FRANCS (ABOUT 48 CENTS). CONSCRIPTS WILL NOW BE ALLOWED FOUR FREE TRIPS A YEAR TO THEIR PLACE OF RESIDENCE. THESE MODEST MEASURES ADD 130 MILLION FRANCS TO THE 1975 DEFENSE BUDGET, WHICH NOW STANDS AT ABOUT 43.8 BILLION FRANCS. SOUFFLET ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THESE ITEMS WILL DO LITTLE TO RAISE MORALE IN THE RANKS, BUT HE PROMISED GREATER EFFORTS IN THE 1976 AND 1977 BUDGETS.

C. EUROGROUP: SOUFFLET INDICATED THAT THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT HAD NEVER SPOKEN OF THE EVENTUALITY OF FRANCE ADHERING TO THE EUROGROUP. "THIS ORGANISM HAS DONE NOTHING TO DEVELOP EUROPEAN ARMAMENTS INDUSTRY AND I DO NOT SEE A PRIORI THE NECESSITY TO JOIN IT."

D. FUTURE COMBAT AIRCRAFT (ACF): THE DEFENSE COUNCIL AGREED THAT THE 1975 BUDGET WOULD INCLUDE FUNDS TO CONTINUE STUDY OF A SECOND PROTOTYPE OF THE FUTURE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COMBAT AIRCRAFT, THE SO-CALLED "SUPER-MIRAGE." THE FIRST PROTOTYPE IS ALREADY UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

E. NUCLEAR TESTING: SOUFFLET CONFIRMED THAT

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SECDEF

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USNMR SHAPE

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FRANCE WILL CONDUCT NO ATMOSPHERIC NUCLEAR TESTS NEXT YEAR. HE SAID FRANCE IS READY TO BEGIN UNDERGROUND TESTS IN 1975. (SEE REF A FOR A MORE DETAILED DISCUSSION OF FRANCE'S NUCLEAR TESTING PROGRAM).

F. SSBN: THE DEFENSE COUNCIL ENDORSED LAST SPRING'S DECISION TO CONSTRUCT A SIXTH SSBN (SEE REF B FOR EMBASSY ANALYSIS OF SSBN DEVELOPMENT).

3. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SENIOR MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OFFICIALS WILL TESTIFY BEFORE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S DEFENSE COMMITTEE IN COMING WEEKS. WITNESSES WILL INCLUDE JEAN COCHARD, DIRECTOR OF MILITARY SERVICE AND THE NATIONAL GENDARMERIE; JEAN-LAURENS DELPECH, MINISTERIAL DELEGATE FOR ARMAMENTS; AND GENERAL MAURIN, CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF. REPORTEDLY THIS WILL MARK THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1960 THAT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE HAS BEEN REPRESENTED BEFORE THE DEFENSE COMMITTEE BY ANYONE OTHER THAN ITS MINISTER.

4. COMMENT: THE ANNOUNCEMENT FOLLOWING THE DEFENSE COUNCIL MEETING CONTAINED NO SURPRISES AND DEMONSTRATED NO SIGNIFICANT SHIFT FROM RECENT FRENCH DEFENSE POLICY. GISCARD'S DECISION TO RETAIN THE 12-MONTH LENGTH OF SERVICE FOR CONSCRIPTS MAY BE INTERPRETED AS A VICTORY FOR SOUFFLET AND THE SENIOR LEADERS OF THE ARMED SERVICES, WHO OPPOSED A REDUCTION OF CONSCRIPT SERVICE. THE DECISION IS UNLIKELY TO PUT TO REST AN ONGOING PUBLIC DEBATE THAT CONSCRIPTION SHOULD BE REDUCED OR ELIMINATED ALTOGETHER. THE UNUSUALLY DETAILED PUBLIC REPORT OF THE DEFENSE COUNCIL'S MEETING TOGETHER WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT A NUMBER OF SENIOR MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OFFICIALS WILL TESTIFY BEFORE THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE, UNDERLINE THE ATMOSPHERE OF "OPENNESS" WHICH GISCARD IS TRYING TO BRING TO DEFENSE AFFAIRS. NO DOUBT A MAJOR PURPOSE OF THIS PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN IS TO MAINTAIN POPULAR AND PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT FOR A GROWING DEFENSE BUDGET AT A TIME WHEN GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES ARE COMING UNDER INCREASED PRESSURE. WE EXPECT THE FRENCH DEFENSE BUDGET WILL BE DEBATED IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN LATE OCTOBER OR EARLY NOVEMBER.
IRWIN

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